

Long Distance by ghiblitrterritory

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Summary:

Mike and Eleven are absolute messes when it comes to being apart.

For Mileven Week 2018

Long Distance

Author's Note:

I know I literally just posted an ST fic earlier today but I didn't know it was Mileven week and if you think for an instant I'm not participating you are wrong

1,235 miles.

When Eleven had first grasped the idea of numbers and their importance, she didn't think they could get so large. She never thought she'd have to *really* pay any attention to counting things that big, not after she had counted almost 400 days away from Mike before.

This, however, proved to be completely false and it was driving her crazy.

In the summer of 1988- the year before they were supposed to ditch Hawkins and go to college and all sorts of stressful things- Mike was forced to visit his family in Maine. His father had a sister up there, and Mike was made to come visit because she had a son around his age (barely) and it would be nice if they got along. Of course Mike had been very adamant about not wanting to go, and Eleven was right behind him in thought. Why should he spend a summer in Maine? Nothing exciting ever happened in Maine- so she heard, anyway.

But, they were still young, and Mike was dragged off with some teary goodbyes. It was weird- they would be alright, and would be inseparable when he got back. There was just no good way for them

to be apart. Lucas and Dustin had tried to cheer her up with jokes and assurances that it would be alright, but Eleven still felt weird about it all. She counted everything. The minutes it would take to get to him, or vice versa. The days that passed between them, how long their phone conversations were.

And the many, many miles between them.

“This getting ridiculous.” Max spoke up one day, while the two girls were walking downtown together. They were waiting for the boys to get out of their respective jobs, and since Max had the day off, they took the time to get some food to pass the time. Of course, Eleven had been very out of it the whole time. She barely touched her waffles at the diner- that was a rare thing in itself. And Max was clearly having none of it.

“You’re way too dependant on Mike sometimes. No offense, of course, but you can have a good time while he’s gone.” The redhead told her, fiddling with a lollipop stick that didn’t even hold anything on it anymore. “You two get so mopey about this stuff, honestly.”

“It’s not mopey.” Eleven muttered, sucking on her own lollipop with a furrowed brow. “We just... when you’ve been through such intense stuff together, and had all that time apart... it’s hard to be away from each other so often, you know?”

Max sighed, tossing her stick into a trash can. “I know. But still, neither of you are getting anything out of feeling so bad all the time. You need to find something to do, just to distract yourself from it. Get a job, volunteer somewhere, start a project. Hell, you can make an effort to watch every movie he’s ever mentioned before and see what you think. He’d probably love to hear the reviews.” For a moment,

that made Eleven smile. While Max was joking, she wasn't wrong. Mike would love to hear that she spent so much time to do something like that, especially if she liked the movies.

The idea tossed around in her head for a couple of days, of distracting herself. What could she do? How would she do it? Finally, an answer came around, and Eleven borrowed money from Hopper to buy a camera.

“Michael!” The gruff voice of Mike’s uncle rang through the house, shaking the walls. “Package for you!”

Mike looked up from his comic, raising a brow and sliding out of his cousin’s empty room to look downstairs. “For me?” He muttered. Hopping down the steps, he gently took a small box from from uncle’s hands, giving him a smile before he dashed back upstairs.

It was reaching the end of summer vacation, or at least the end of his vacation in Maine, and it was starting to feel almost unlivable. His phone calls with El had been shorter, it seemed. Every minute outside of that seemed to drag. Plus, the heat sucked. Mike was feeling basically miserable. But, when he got the box and saw the scribbled name of ‘Jane Hopper’ on the shipping label, something revitalized in him.

Mike tore the box open without care, peeking in behind the cardboard folds. It was... a lot of VHS tapes. And a camera. He

furrowed his brow, pulling out the first tape he spotted. 'July 1st, 1988' read the label in the same messy handwriting he knew. His fingers brushed the corners gently, before he put it back in the box and took it all downstairs. Taking up most of the loveseat there, he put in the July 1st tape, and pressed play. TV static took up the screen for a second. When it focused, her face popped into view as clear as day.

"Is this the start button?" Eleven asked, adjusting it shakily. A soft laugh echoed behind the camera. "Yeah, that's it, you're recording." Dustin's voice rang through.

"Oh." She paused. "Oh! Okay. Uh... Hi, Mike! It is... July first, and it's been almost a month since you've been gone. And I decided to... make a project! I made- well, I'm going to make them, it hasn't happened yet since this is only day one-" "El!" "Sorry! Right- anyways. I'm making a video every day this month to show you all the fun stuff we do, and just to say stuff to you! This video is gonna be a catch up, really, so.... Yeah. Get ready for that!"

For hours, Mike sat there and watched the tapes. Every she had sent was long, and full of content. Some were just here talking excitedly about things like movies she had watched, things their friend group had done or something she learned. Others were her dragging the camera around, letting the others in on the action and giving him a chance to experience everything. There was one early on, where she sat in her room and almost cried. But most of the videos were more pleasant. Happy. She smiled in all of them, and stared right at him with big brown eyes. Even if it didn't feel literal, Mike swore she could see him through the screen. He watched them twice once he'd made it through them all, and his mother had to pry him away from the television.

Once he'd stopped, he took the camera out of the box, turning it on. It lit up almost instantly and he saw that there was nothing on it. He grinned.

August in Indiana sucked. Eleven could feel the sweat dripping down her back in pools, not at all helped by the nerves running through her. She sat on the curb in front of the movie theatre, fiddling with Hopper's hair tie and biting at her lip. Today was the day. He was supposed to be back- they were going to meet right there, as soon as he got there.

The day had moved slow. She had hovered around the downtown Hawkins area for hours- since almost 8 am. She'd eaten her weight out of anxiety, held the hands of everyone in The Party, ranted her excitement and fear to more people than she could remember, and it wasn't even noon. Her heart was jumping. It was agonizing. Why was she so nervous?

Eleven checked the watch on her wrist- Mike's watch, that he'd given her before he left. She had no idea when he was actually going to get there. He promised it would be this specific day, but no real time was ever laid out. Max suggested getting inside out of the heat, but Eleven was stubborn, not wanting to miss their meeting. So the others brought her cold drinks and made sure she wasn't too hot out there.

They knew that was a better plan than arguing.

Seconds ticked by. Minutes. Hours. It felt like the sun had started to

set hours ago, but Eleven tried not to let that make her nervous. He would be there. He promised.

Just as she thought that, she swore she could hear a car door slam. By now, most people had tried to get home before dark settled in. So, that sound wasn't common. It made her jump to her feet, whipping around for any sign of him. Loud yelling echoed around her, his annoyed tone becoming clearer.

"No, mom- I promised! I don't care! Just- I'll get a ride home, I have to go!"

Eleven pinpointed the sound, and before she knew what she was doing, she ran. At full speed, she dashed down the sidewalk and repressed a sob when he rounded a corner, stopping in tracks. She stopped for a moment, taking him in before starting again and colliding into him. The wind was knocked from them both, but they barely stumbled as their arms went around each other fast. Eleven buried her face in his chest and felt her lips wobble, while his shoulders started to shake.

"You're home." She whispered, tugging him close. "You're home, thank god."

"I missed you so much." Mike talked into her curls, taking it all in. Hawkins, summer, *her*. It was unreal. "I hated waiting so long. To be home, to see you. God, I hated Maine so much more with that in mind." Eleven laughed at that, pulling away just enough to take his face in her hands and give him a peck on the lips. "You're here now. That's all that matters."

They stayed like that for a while, hugging and crying into each other and revelling in being together. At some point, there were picked up by their friends, followed by a mini celebration of Mike's return with a movie and some pizza at Will's place. It was short, but sweet, and when everyone else went home, Mike and Eleven sat on the porch in wait for their rides. There was silence between them- a comfortable silence, to be certain. Eleven's head was sitting against his shoulder, and Mike had his arm around her waist. It was nearly perfect.

"I never got a response." Eleven said all of a sudden, causing Mike to look down at her. She looked right back up. "About the videos. You never said anything about what I sent you."

"Oh. Oh! Yeah, I nearly forgot." Mike smiled sheepishly. He reached out for a small bookbag he had lugged with him for the day, unzipping it slowly. "I loved them a lot, really. It was sweet, and I'm glad you guys had fun." He muttered. Then, he pulled out the camera, smiling at it before giving it to her. "I never got the chance to record anything on it, really. There's some short stuff with my cousin. But, hey, figured I might as well return it."

Eleven brushed her fingers over it, biting the corner of her lip. "Thanks. I'm glad you liked the videos. It took so long to get them on tape." "I don't doubt that." Mike chuckled. Lights faded in at the end of the Byers' driveway, and Hopper's police car rolled up.

"Alright, kid, let's go." Hopper's voice rang into the night sky. Eleven sighed, sitting up and looking at Mike. "See you tomorrow?"

"And every day after." Mike linked their pinkies quickly, making it an official promise. Eleven couldn't help her grin. She stood up, holding his hand for just a few more seconds as she walked away, letting it go

when she got too far and crawling into the car. It sped off soon after. Mike huffed, holding his hand gently.

He was never, ever gonna be that far from her again. He could at least say that much.